



# Arizona State Senate *Issue Brief*

November 14, 2006

## **Note to Reader:**

The Senate Research Staff provides nonpartisan, objective legislative research, policy analysis and related assistance to the members of the Arizona State Senate. The *Research Briefs* series, which includes the *Issue Brief*, *Background Brief* and *Issue Paper*, is intended to introduce a reader to various legislatively related issues and provide useful resources to assist the reader in learning more on a given topic. Because of frequent legislative and executive activity, topics may undergo frequent changes. Additionally, nothing in the *Brief* should be used to draw conclusions on the legality of an issue.

## **MARICOPA COUNTY REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

### ***Federal Transportation Planning Requirements***

Arizona has six regional Councils of Governments (COGs). Through an Executive Order, the COG boundaries were established by Governor Jack Williams in 1970 in response to federal planning requirements. In addition to transportation planning, COG functions may include economic development, community development and air and water quality monitoring. These regional planning agencies are governed by local elected officials who work cooperatively with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to plan for transportation infrastructure throughout the state. Each Council creates a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which is a comprehensive, performance-based transportation plan. Outside of Maricopa and Pima counties, COGs include the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG), the Northern Arizona Council of Governments (NACOG), the South Eastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO) and the Western Arizona Council of Governments (WACOG).

In 1973, the Federal Transportation Act required that each urbanized area (an area with 50,000 or more population) establish a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The federal law required that the governor of each state designate the agency to serve as the MPO. In Maricopa County, the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) serves as the MPO. The Pima Association of Governments serves as the designated MPO for the Pima County region. In Yuma County, the Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization serves as the MPO. Additionally, the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization has recently been formed.

### ***Maricopa County***

MAG serves as the planning organization for the Maricopa County area and is responsible for planning and financing the regional transportation system. MAG is required to develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which identifies all

transportation projects (federal, state, local and privately funded projects) for five-year periods for the region. In order for federal transportation funds to be utilized, they must be included in the TIP. MAG is additionally required to conduct a federally certified transportation planning process, develop a 20-year, multimodal long-range transportation plan and provide conformity determinations for transportation plans, programs and projects with applicable air quality plans.

The MAG Regional Council established a Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) consisting of members of MAG and representatives of the private sector to make recommendations to the Regional Council regarding the RTP, the TIP and amendments. In 2003, the Legislature codified the TPC and established the procedure for developing and approving the RTP. The Legislature also required that MAG approve and certify the RTP to the Governor and Legislature before December 1, 2003, and the issue of levying a transportation tax in Maricopa County be presented to the voters in 2004. The RTP was completed in November 2003.

In the November 2004 general election, Maricopa County voters approved Proposition 400, which effectively continued a transportation tax that was originally voter-approved for 20 years in 1985 until December 31, 2025. The projected revenues from the transportation tax will be distributed as follows: 56.2 percent for freeways and other routes in the state highway system; 10.5 percent for major arterial streets; and 33.3 percent for capital costs, maintenance and operations of public transportation, and capital costs and utility relocation costs associated with a light rail public transit system. Revenues from the transportation tax will fund approximately 54 percent of the RTP. Other revenue sources include federal transit funds and ADOT highway funds.

Beginning in 2010 and every fifth year thereafter, the Auditor General is required to contract with a nationally recognized independent auditor to conduct a performance audit of the Maricopa RTP and projects

scheduled for funding during the next five years, and to make recommendations regarding whether further implementation of a project or transportation system is warranted or needs modifications. Statute provides a process for amending the RTP if the audit finds that modifications are needed.

### ***FUTURE PROJECTS***

In FY 2005-2006, the Legislature appropriated \$245 million to the Statewide Transportation Acceleration Needs (STAN) Account. Appropriated STAN monies are divided according to county, with 60 percent designated for Maricopa County, 16 percent for Pima County and all other counties sharing the remaining 24 percent. The monies are designated to the acceleration and construction or reconstruction of freeways, state highways, bridges and interchanges that are included in the state highway system. MAG is charged with identifying projects and submitting the list to the State Transportation Board for its approval.

A Design Concept Report and Environmental Impact Statement are currently proceeding on the South Mountain Freeway. A U.S. Department of Transportation "record of decision" on a recommended alternative for the corridor is expected by the end of 2007. Approximately \$640 million has been programmed from FY 2006-2007 through FY 2010-2011 to cover the design, right of-way and construction for the South Mountain Freeway. According to a MAG report, preliminary information from ongoing engineering studies on the South Mountain Freeway indicate that the total cost of the facility may exceed the funding allocated to this project by an amount in the range of \$600 million.

Preliminary engineering and environmental analyses are proceeding on SR 801 (I-10 Reliever), Loop 303, Red Mountain Freeway, Price Freeway, US 60 (Grand Ave. and Superstition) and I-10 (collector/distributor) and will begin shortly on the Williams Gateway Freeway. Design work is underway on widening projects on the I-10, and initial design work is also proceeding on certain segments of Loop 303 in the West Valley.

Overall, new freeway corridors in the MAG RTP add approximately 490 additional new lane miles to the network and include the I-10 Reliever (SR 801), the Loop 303 Freeway, the South Mountain Freeway (Loop 202) and the Williams Gateway Freeway. Additionally, these improvements include 530 additional lane-miles of general purpose lanes and 300 lane-miles of high occupancy vehicle lanes, covering essentially the entire existing system, including future widening of the freeway loop elements now under construction.

## ***ADDITIONAL RESOURCES***

- Maricopa Association of Governments  
302 N. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue, Suite 300  
Phoenix, AZ 85003  
602-254-6300  
[www.mag.maricopa.gov](http://www.mag.maricopa.gov)
- Regional Transportation Plan Statutes:  
Arizona Revised Statutes, Title 28, Chapter  
17, Article 2